



MEDIA RELEASE

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Consumer Education Project of Milk SA



Dairy: your ally during menopause

Here's how adding enough dairy to your daily diet can benefit your health during menopause.



Strong bones for health

We go through much of our adult lives never thinking about the density of our bones, but this changes as we hit menopause. It marks a time of life when we must start thinking about living a 'bone-friendly' lifestyle.


Estrogen plays a significant role in bone metabolism, and as levels drop during menopause, women are at a higher risk of losing healthy bone density and developing bone-related issues like osteoporosis. In fact,

As women approach and go through menopause, they experience a range of health challenges. One of the most significant aspects of menopause is the decline in estrogen, which impacts quality of life and affects many areas of health including bone and heart health. While this life stage brings its own set of hurdles, what you eat can help manage these menopausal changes. Dairy products, in particular, have been shown to play a crucial role in supporting women's health during menopause.

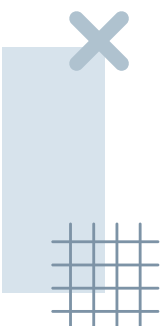


postmenopausal women are more prone to bone fractures, especially hip fractures later in life, due to the rapid loss of bone mass.

Registered Dietitian, Linda Reid says, "The good news is that bone health can be boosted during and after menopause through our diets. Calcium and vitamin D are necessary nutrients for replacing bone cells and maintaining bone tissue. Dairy products such as milk, yoghurt, and cheese are excellent sources of calcium, and you should aim to consume several servings of dairy a day to help meet calcium requirements. According to the National Osteoporosis Foundation, women, 52 years and over, need 1,200 mg of calcium per day to support their bones. A typical serving of yoghurt, 250ml, will generally provide 300 mg of calcium, a quarter of the recommended daily intake.



Linda says: "Vitamin D plays an essential role in ensuring the absorption of calcium from our food. Sunshine is a good way to help maintain an adequate vitamin D status. About 30 to 40 minutes of sunlight exposure a day (before 11:00 or after 15:00 for the safest sunlight exposure) can help ensure the synthesis of this prohormone through the skin and keep our vitamin D levels up. We can also obtain vitamin D from including foods such as oily fish, egg yolks, red meat and liver in our diet and also explore supplementation options if necessary."



A 'bone-friendly' lifestyle also includes consuming adequate amounts of good quality protein to support skeletal muscle mass, engaging in physical activity such as a daily walk, avoiding smoking and limiting alcohol consumption.



A happy heart

Menopause can increase the risk of cardiovascular disease due to rising cholesterol levels and increased body fat, particularly around your waist. With lower levels of estrogen, women's cardiovascular health becomes more vulnerable.

"Dairy products can contribute to heart health, thanks to their unique combination of nutrients within dairy" says Maretha Vermaak, a registered dietitian at Rediscover Dairy. "While full-fat dairy contains saturated fats, which were once thought to negatively affect heart health, recent research shows a different picture. There are new studies demonstrating that fermented dairy products like yoghurt, kefir and hard cheeses, even if full fat, may have protective effects on cardiovascular system, regulating cholesterol levels and supporting a healthy heart."

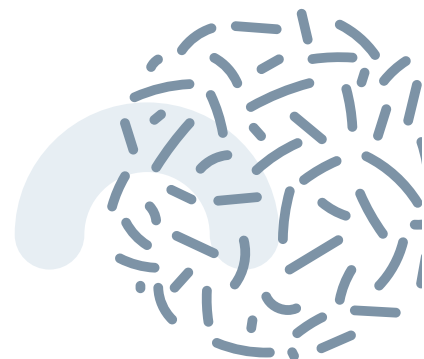



In fact, several studies show that consuming yoghurt daily is linked to lower risks of heart disease and type 2 diabetes, likely due to its calcium content and the healthy bacteria it provides. These friendly bacteria in fermented dairy foods like yoghurt and kefir are believed to have a positive influence on heart health and overall metabolism.



Managing weight during menopause

It's common for women to experience weight gain during menopause, especially around the central waist area. This shift in body composition can increase the risk of overweight, obesity and other health complications.





Linda says, "Dairy can be a valuable part of a weight management plan. The calcium in dairy has been found to help limit fat absorption, while its high-quality proteins help preserve muscle mass, which is essential as your metabolism slows down. Interestingly, research also suggests that the healthy bacteria in fermented dairy products, like yoghurt, can positively influence gut health, which may contribute to weight control. Additionally, dairy's quality protein content plays a role in satiety and managing appetite. Increasing your intake of protein can help you feel fuller for longer, preventing overeating and helping you maintain a healthy weight."



Reducing inflammation

Inflammation can worsen many of the health issues menopausal women face, from heart disease to joint pain. Dairy products, especially fermented ones like cheese and yoghurt, have been shown to help reduce systemic inflammation. Studies have found that consuming dairy lowers markers of inflammation, including certain proteins in the blood linked to chronic diseases.

What's interesting is that not all dairy products affect inflammation in the same way. Fermented dairy tends to have a lesser pro-inflammatory effect than non-fermented options like butter and cream. So, choosing foods like yoghurt, cheese or kefir could be more beneficial for reducing inflammation.



Relief from menopausal symptoms

Hot flashes, night sweats, and mood swings are just a few of the common symptoms women experience during menopause. Emerging research suggests that dairy could help alleviate some of these uncomfortable symptoms. For instance, increased calcium intake is linked to fewer hot flashes, and vitamin D has been associated with better mood regulation.



Dairy foods are also a great source of tryptophan, an amino acid that helps your body produce melatonin, which regulates sleep. If you're struggling with sleep disturbances during menopause, including dairy in your diet might help improve the quality of your rest.



Four servings of dairy a day

From bone and heart health to managing weight, menopausal symptoms and reducing inflammation, the benefits of dairy during and post menopause are clear. The general recommendation is that women going through menopause should aim to get four servings of dairy a day, and there is evidence that fermented options such as yoghurt, cheese and kefir are excellent choices. A serving is 250 ml of milk or 40 g of cheese or 200 g amasi/yoghurt.

Here are 6 ways to help incorporate more dairy in your day:

1

Start the day with yoghurt-based smoothies - Blend a serving of plain yoghurt with fresh fruit, chia seeds, and a handful of leafy greens such as baby spinach for a calcium-packed, dairy breakfast that includes probiotics from the fermented yoghurt.

2

Snack on cheese and fruit - Opt for a serving of an aged cheese like cheddar or gouda, which are rich in calcium, paired with fresh or dried fruit as a mid-morning or afternoon snack. This is an easy way to get a serving of dairy without added sugar.

3

Add kefir to your breakfast - Pour a glass of healthy bacteria-rich kefir over your morning granola or oats or drink it on its own. It's a great source of calcium and probiotics that supports gut health.

4

Include cottage cheese in salads, wraps and sandwiches - Cottage cheese is a versatile option that can be added to many kinds of light meals, enhancing flavour, texture and nutrition. It pairs well with vegetables, can be dolloped on baked potatoes or used as the base for a crudité dip. A daily serving of cottage cheese gives you a boost of both protein and calcium.



5

Use milk or yoghurt in cooking - Swap water for milk or yoghurt in cooking. For example, use milk when making soups and curries, or add plain yoghurt to sauces and salad dressings for a creamy texture that boosts dairy intake.

6

Choose fermented dairy drinks - For a convenient on-the-go option, grab a drinkable yoghurt or a probiotic-rich dairy smoothie. These are easy ways to consume a serving of fermented dairy during busy days.

Perhaps include your favourite coffee latte or cappuccino for an added daily dairy boost!



For dairy ideas and recipes join the Rediscover Dairy Facebook page :
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For find out more about dairy's role on healthy diets, visit www.rediscoverdairy.co.za



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